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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (9/02): WHITHER INTERNAL  
PALESTINIAN DIVISION?

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Main Stories:  
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The three dailies' front pages highlight news from the weekly session of the Palestinian Authority (PA) cabinet: Public employees will receive last month's salary and an additional 415 USD on September 4, according to PA Information Minister Al-Maliky. In related coverage, Al-Quds and Al-Ayyam report that the World Bank transferred almost \$121 million to the Palestinian Government on September 1, to be used for social services including in the areas of education and health.

Al-Quds leads with news of an upcoming meeting to discuss intra-Palestinian dialogue between Egyptian Intelligence Chief Sulayman and a delegation of members from the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Palestinian Popular Struggle Front in Cairo on September 2. Related coverage in Al-Quds cites German wire service DPA in reporting on Hamas leader Ismail Radwan's refusal, in a September 1 Gaza press conference, to deny or confirm a possible meeting between Palestinian Authority President Abbas and Hamas leader Masha'al next month. Radwan did, however, confirm that there are Egyptian efforts underway to arrange a meeting between Fatah and Hamas members in Cairo in October.

Palestinian Authority President Abbas would win new presidential elections according to poll results showcased on Al Quds' front page and an inside page of Al-Ayyam. The poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Political and Survey Research on August 28 to August 30 shows that 53% of respondents in the West Bank and the Gaza would vote for Abbas and 39% would vote for Hamas leader Ismail Haniyyah if new elections were held today.

Al-Quds reports on its front page that Jordanian King Abdullah II said in a recent interview with French weekly "L'Express" that he is

unconvinced that Israel is interested in solving the Arab-Israeli conflict. The report characterized the comment as an "unusual" attack by Abdullah on Israeli policy.

The severe injuring of a Palestinian by Israeli soldiers in Ni'lin village near Ramallah on September 1 is front page news in all dailies. According to reporting, the soldiers "invaded" the Palestinian's home and arrested his brother for unspecified reasons on September 1. Dailies also report that two Gaza fishermen were injured by rockets fired from an Israeli military ship.

The World Bank wants to rescue the Dead Sea, according to an exclusive interview by World Bank experts with Al-Ayyam. The experts explained that they are studying the possibility of connecting the Red Sea to the Dead Sea in order to replenish the water level of the shrinking Dead Sea.

Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida provide front page updates on prisoner exchange talks between Hamas and Israel. Al-Ayyam cites German wire DPA in reporting on a letter from Israel asking Hamas to retreat from its "exaggerated" demands. Al-Hayat Al-Jadida also reports that Israeli Minister of Interior Dichter said on September 1 that Hamas is hindering efforts to finalize the prisoners' exchange deal, which would include the release of Israeli soldier Shalit.

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Weekend stories  
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Monday, September 1, 2008

The three dailies led with a read-out of the Olmert-Abbas meeting held on August 31 at Olmert's Jerusalem home. All dailies report that Palestinian Authority President Abbas and Israeli Premier Olmert agreed to continue negotiations and reach a comprehensive agreement by the end of this year. The agreement would provide detailed solutions, not a "mere mention of good will or the [negotiation] principles of each side".

Sunday, August 31, 2008

The top story in Al-Quds and lead pictures in all dailies highlighted the August 30-31 opening of the Gaza-Egypt Rafah crossing point. Reporting noted that 1,500 travelers, including stranded Egyptian residents and "humanitarian cases" on the Gaza side crossed into Egypt on August 30. The reports expected that 400 Palestinians in need of urgent medical care will cross into Egypt on August 31.

Palestinian Authority (PA) Fayyad's call for forming a transitional PA government as the "logical" way to "reunite the homeland" received highlighted coverage in all dailies. Leading with the story, Al-Ayyam quoted Fayyad reiterating the PA's "readiness" to manage the Gaza Strip crossings immediately in accordance with the Agreement on Movement and Access signed with Israel in 2005. In related developments, Al-Hayat Al-Jadida highlighted that the deployment of Arab forces in Gaza is supported by Egypt, but fully rejected by Hamas.

Israeli authorities intend to expand the Jerusalem area Giv'on Hadasha settlement by confiscating 25 acres of land belonging to the Palestinian town of Beit Ijza, the front pages reported. Quoting Hatem Abdul Qader, advisor to Palestinian Authority President Abbas on Jerusalem affairs, Al-Ayyam reported that three Jerusalemite families will file a petition in the Israeli court system to prevent the confiscation of their land.

Al-Ayyam's and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida's front-pages reported that Palestinian Authority intelligence services raided two mosque in the West Bank city of Hebron, seizing "caches of Hamas' weapons and incitement pamphlets." Ten people were also arrested on suspicions of illegal possession of weapons, according to the same reports.

Saturday, August 30, 2008

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida's front page highlights remarks by Palestinian President Abbas in a recent interview with Al-Arabiyya, explaining that Secretary Rice informed the Israelis and Palestinians on her last visit, that the "occupied West Bank" includes East Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea. Abbas added that the Israelis "did not object" to Rice's position. In related negotiations coverage, Al-Ayyam quoted PLO negotiator Saeb Erakat refuting reports that an agreement can be reached with the Israelis by September. Erakat underscored that "a huge gap" still exists between the two sides' positions on all final-status issues.

Al-Quds carried President Bush's Ramadan greeting as published by AFP.

Al-Quds ran a page 2 interview with Christine Griffin of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, who was visiting Palestinian

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areas on a PD-coordinated program regarding equal employment and disability issues. The coverage, which also includes Griffin's picture, quoted her call on Israel to ease the movement of the disabled through Israeli checkpoints.

U.S. presidential elections continued to capture front-page coverage in all dailies, highlighting reports on reactions to Obama's speech before the Democratic National Convention and McCain's "surprise" pick of Sarah Palin as his running mate.

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BLOCK QUOTES:  
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¶1. Independent Al-Quds runs an editorial by Gaza political scientist Dr. Naji Sadiq Sharab, entitled, "Whither the [Internal] Division..." (9/02): "[T]his internal division [between Fatah and Hamas]...will mean the disappearance of the possibility of establishing a Palestinian state ... it strips the main issues of their political meaning and human rights implications. For example, there is no need to talk about Jerusalem as a political capital. Instead, [the discussion will] focus on its religious and spiritual importance. Everybody is forgetting about the importance of its borders and geographic definition ...this [internal] division could also be dangerous if it means that Palestinians will no longer have the power to determine their [political] options ..."

¶2. Al-Ayyam runs an editorial by regular columnist Hasan Asfour entitled, "Hamas' Refusal of Arab Forces..." (9/02): "[H]amas' refusal to study the idea of Arab forces [in the Gaza Strip] is a refusal to end the [internal] division and instead keep Gaza as a bargaining chip for the future... Hamas' position [on Arab forces] is an indicator of its seriousness about national dialogue..."

WALLES